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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0307
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000894

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SUBJECT: UN CONTINUES SUPPORT FOR ELECTORAL PROCESS

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 812

Classified By: Amb. Joseph LeBaron, Reasons 1.4(b)(d)

(C) Key Points

-- In a July 18 letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UN formally announced its continued support for the democratic transition process in Mauritania.

-- The letter, which congratulates the government on the success of the referendum, includes 16 recommendations for improving the inclusivity of the electoral lists, enhancing the role of the electoral commission, and strengthening the transition process.

-- Key recommendations include:

- Reopening the voter lists before the November elections;
- Improving the process for issuing National ID cards required for voter registration;
- Allowing for national election observers; and
- Ensuring the independence of the electoral commission and administration in the coming elections.

(C) Comments

-- The letter contains no surprises, and tracks closely with the UN election assessment mission's out-brief with Ambassador June 29 (reftel). The letter, however, does strengthen our hand in pressuring the government to take the necessary steps to improve the electoral process.

-- Ambassador will present many of these recommendations in his next meeting with Colonel Fal.

End Key Points and Comments.

11. (C) UN Under Secretary General of Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari formally announced the UN's continued support for the democratic transition process in a letter to

Mauritanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmed Ould Sid'Ahmed on July 18. The letter, which UN Resident Representative provided Ambassador, includes 16 recommendations for improving the inclusivity of the electoral lists, enhancing the role of the National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC), and strengthening the transition process. The letter followed a formal UN election assessment mission sent to observe the referendum June 19 - 29 (reftel).

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. (C) The letter offered six recommendations to improve the electoral lists and make them more inclusive, exhaustive and exact:

- Reopen the voter lists before the November municipal and legislative elections to allow additional persons to register to vote.
- Conduct a post-election survey to assess the completeness of voter lists and identify registration problems.
- Establish mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of persons with Mauritanian nationality who did not have their nationality recognized during the census for various reasons (fraud, corruption, exclusion of certain groups, and administrative errors and slowness). Hopefully, particular attention will be paid to those who have been repatriated or have voluntarily returned.
- Establish corrective measures for the issuance of National

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ID cards to allow for the inclusion of all potential electors who are currently unduly excluded.

- Assure that electors with National ID cards are on the voter lists and have their voter card.
- Make additional efforts to ensure that electors receive their voter cards before the next elections.

13. (C) The letter offered five recommendations to improve the National Independent Electoral Commission's (NIEC) independence and effectiveness:

- Hold a conference as soon as possible to assess the lessons learned from the referendum in order to improve the operations of the upcoming elections.
- The election assessment mission noted that the independence of NIEC was called into question during the referendum. It will be necessary for the NIEC to more strongly exert its role as election supervisor, in order to correct this perception and avoid discrediting the electoral process.
- Train poll workers, particularly on creating uniformed electoral procedures. In order to do this, electoral authorities should use the manual prepared by the UN Electoral Assistance Team.
- Clarify the role and provide training for the security forces deployed at polling stations in order to limit their involvement in the voting process and tabulation.
- Regarding electoral disputes, the UN recommends that judicial authorities, political parties and the NIEC initiate working sessions to create a climate of trust, and allow for the proper management of electoral disputes.

14. (C) Finally, the letter provides five additional recommendations for strengthening the transition process:

- Establish mechanisms for accrediting national election

observers.

- Enforce the press law providing fair and equal access to the media for political parties and candidates.

- Assemble all electoral laws (currently contained in various legal texts) into a single coherent source.

- It is crucial for the credibility of the government and administration that it remains neutral throughout the electoral process in order to maintain the calm atmosphere seen during the referendum.

- The UN would like to encourage the government to put in place a mechanism, following from the National Consultations (in October 2005), to maintain and consolidate the climate of dialogue and mutual trust and go more deeply into issues of national interest, specifically the human rights abuses from 1989. The UN is aware that national reconciliation is a long-term affair.

LeBaron